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28 SEP 1984

DDI-05433-84/1

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence

FROM:

[REDACTED]
Director of Global Issues

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SUBJECT: Updated CIA Report on Food Situation in
Afghanistan [REDACTED]

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1. The attached is for your signature. [REDACTED]

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2. State Department has requested a CIA analysis of the food situation in Afghanistan as a means of ascertaining the need for emergency food relief. Press reporting has indicated a serious food problem in Afghanistan although we have no evidence to suggest an urgent need on the scale suggested by INR. Personnel from NESAs and OGI have met with State analysts several times in recent weeks. We have reached agreement on the type of analysis we can provide and the timing, given the scarcity of data and constraints on personnel resources. While we can adequately address the question of food production, we expect to encounter some difficulty in assessing the question of food availability given the sparse collateral information on food distribution, stocks, pricing, and consumption levels. [REDACTED]

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3. For your information I have attached the two most recent studies on Afghanistan done by NESAs and OGI. You should also be aware [REDACTED] that Ambassador Hinton and the government of Pakistan do not support the State program [REDACTED]. In our view, there is little possibility of the food aid reaching Afghanistan before the onset of winter. [REDACTED]

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Attachments:
As stated

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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

DDI- 05433-84/2
28 SEP 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Frank McNeil
Acting Director of Intelligence and Research
Department of State

SUBJECT: Updated CIA Report on Food Situation in
Afghanistan [redacted]

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In response to your request of 19 September 1984, we have begun an analysis of the agriculture and food situation in Afghanistan. We plan to deliver the first of the two reports you have requested on 15 October, focusing on agricultural production in the non-irrigated farming regions of Afghanistan's northern plains and the irrigated areas of the Panjshir Valley and around Herat, the sites of the heaviest fighting. Crop failures in the non-irrigated region have historically been the cause of most famines. We plan to examine agricultural conditions in all areas, including production and distribution, in the second report which should be available around 1 December. [redacted]

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[redacted]
Robert M. Gates
Deputy Director for Intelligence

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Afghanistan: Tenuous Food Situation []

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Food supplies over the past year probably have been comparable to levels before the Soviet invasion and adequate to meet current needs. Soviet operations have caused some disruptions, but have not significantly reduced overall food supply levels. Localized shortages of food and high prices have resulted from disruptions in the distribution system and poor harvests in a few areas. The high level of military operations last spring and this summer or an effort by the Soviets to deny food to the insurgents and their rural supporters could lead to serious shortages as early as this winter, and unfavorable weather could lead to widespread shortages by early next year. []

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Agricultural Problems and Resiliency 25X1

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Since the Soviet invasion, the agricultural sector has faced numerous disruptions. []

[] large numbers of landowners have fled the country, taking valuable machinery as well as financial assets. The flight of more than 3 million people to neighboring Pakistan and Iran and migration to the cities have reduced the extent of cultivation as well as demand. Routine maintenance of vineyards, orchards, and irrigation networks is being neglected. []

The press [] have reported that military operations have resulted in burned crops, damaged grainfields, and destroyed irrigation systems. In some cases the Soviets have deliberately destroyed crops in retaliation for insurgent operations. [] land along major transportation routes and around military bases has fallen out of production either because the Soviets want a security zone or the farmers fear for their lives. []

The Soviets, however, generally allow the agricultural sector to operate as it did before the invasion. Government-produced fertilizer, for example, is sold freely throughout Afghanistan. []

The primitive nature of Afghanistan's agricultural sector has softened the impact of the Soviet occupation. Most farmers operate at the subsistence level and are not heavily dependent on outside sources of modern equipment, fuel, chemical fertilizers, improved seeds, or pesticides. []

Manpower apparently has been sufficient to sow and harvest crops, albeit on fewer acres. We believe some of those who have left the country or migrated to the cities return to work in the fields during periods of peak labor demand. []

Domestic Food Production

[] there were good food harvests in most regions during 1983. The major exception was in the Khowst Valley, where heavy fighting resulted in abandoned fields. While we cannot measure production of all food crops, we believe the wheat

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Major Grain-Producing Regions in Afghanistan



harvest is a useful indicator of total food production. We estimate the 1983 wheat crop at between 2.5 and 3.0 million metric tons.

Production of industrial crops, even by government records, has dropped dramatically. Harvests of cotton, the most important commercial crop, and sugar beets have declined by two-thirds since the mid-1970s. We believe some of the resources in producing these crops—land and labor—may now be used in producing basic foodstuffs.

Imports Fill Gap

We estimate that slightly more than 300,000 tons of wheat were brought into Afghanistan from the USSR and Pakistan in 1983. According to Soviet and Afghan press reporting, wheat imports from the Soviet Union in 1983 were 160,000 to 180,000 tons. Most of the Soviet grain was sent to Kabul, where the population has

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10 August 1984

Agriculture Before the Invasion

Agriculture is the most important sector of the economy. In the mid-to-late 1970s, agriculture provided about 60 percent of national income and employed 80 percent of the population. Agricultural output grew by 3 percent annually in the mid-1970s, and the country was roughly self-sufficient in foodgrain production in 1977. []

Afghanistan's cultivated land is scattered throughout the country, mostly in valleys along rivers and other sources of water because rainfall is uncertain and inconsistent. Only 8 million of Afghanistan's 63 million hectares are arable, and throughout the mid-to-late 1970s Afghan farmers cultivated on average only about half of the arable land. Total irrigable area is about 5.3 million hectares, of which about 2.6 million were irrigated annually, with the balance remaining fallow. About 1.4 million hectares of irrigated land has adequate water throughout the year to make double cropping possible. []

The production of foodgrains utilizes 90 percent of land under cultivation. The remaining 10 percent has been devoted primarily to fruits, vegetables, cotton, oil seeds, and fodder crops:

- Wheat, the primary grain crop and main food staple, is grown on about 60 percent of the total cultivated area—2.4 million hectares. It is grown

throughout the country and on half of the irrigated land. In 1976, wheat production reached a record 2.9 million metric tons, and no imports were required.

- Corn is the second most important cereal and is used for human consumption and animal fodder. It is planted on about 500,000 hectares, and average production has been about 800,000 tons. Corn is grown primarily in the eastern valleys bordering Pakistan and in the Helmand Valley. 25X1
- Rice is grown principally in the north around Baghlan and Konduz; other rice-growing areas are Herat, Nangarhar, and Helmand. Rice is planted on about 200,000 hectares, and peak production reached about 450,000 tons in 1976.
- Barley is grown on about 300,000 hectares, primarily in rain-fed, highland areas with short growing seasons. It is used for human consumption and animal feed. Peak output was about 400,000 tons in 1976. 25X1
- Truck gardens, cultivated orchards, and vineyards, while utilizing less than 10 percent of the arable land, yield an important harvest of vegetables, fruits, and nuts. Peak production was about 1.6 million tons in 1976. [] 25X1

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increased to nearly 2 million from 750,000 before the invasion [] indicate that the movement of people from rural to urban areas, disruption of transportation, and the government's inability to collect grain and other agricultural products in insurgent-controlled areas left urban areas with serious shortfalls. []

- Most of rural Afghanistan, which is controlled by the insurgents or is only subject to limited government control, appears to be almost self-sufficient in food production. [] most of the insurgents get their food from the local

population and do not carry large supplies while [] operations. [] 25X1

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Military operations and patrols, however, have interfered with internal and external trading necessary to balance food deficit and surplus areas and have caused higher prices. Goods used in barter are visible and subject to destruction or confiscation. We believe there is now a greater use of and more demand for money to buy basic commodities and reduce the risks of transporting goods. []

Our estimate of the range of food supplies in Afghanistan leads us to conclude that even at the lower end of the range there was sufficient food in the country to feed the population at prewar levels if distributed properly. If food supplies were at the upper range of the estimate, they would have exceeded minimum requirements by 400,000 tons. []

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Overall Food Situation

Food supplies in Afghanistan last year probably were near the levels available before the Soviet invasion. We believe there were 2.8 to 3.3 million tons of wheat available from domestic production and imports to feed roughly 14 million people. Afghanistan was generally considered self-sufficient in wheat supplies in 1976, when wheat production reached 2.9 million tons and the population was roughly 14.5 million. []

Even when supplies are sufficient, however, problems in distribution and combat operations could still lead to spot shortages. Recent reports indicate, moreover, that supplies probably were greater than the minimum. For the past year we have had little reporting of severe food shortages. Extra food would compensate for the additional inefficiencies in the system, allow for private stockpiles and hoarding, especially in the rural areas, and the destruction of some food supplies from military operations and sabotage. []

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10 August 1984

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Outlook

Preliminary information indicates that food supplies in 1984 generally are still adequate, with the possible exception of Farah province. Crops produced thus far this year—primarily winter wheat—appeared to be of at least normal quantity.



Afghanistan's food supplies, agriculture production, and food distribution networks, however, remain fragile. The advent of widespread combat operations or a Soviet effort to deny food supplies could easily upset the tenuous balance and could quickly lead to localized shortages. We already have reports that in the Panjsher Valley, for example, the fighting from April to June left crops rotting in the fields. If large areas of crops go unharvested and unplanted, and the Soviets block the main entrances to the valley, the inhabitants are likely to face shortages this winter. The same would hold true in other areas of concentrated military activity.



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